

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Marking launch of WHO-UNICEF child injury report, helmet ceremony focuses on child deaths on Vietnam's roads

**Hanoi, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008** -- Asia Injury Prevention Foundation (AIP Foundation) organized a *Helmets for Kids* ceremony at Hoang Hoa Tham primary school today. The ceremony was timed to celebrate the WHO and UNICEF's global release of the *World report on child injury prevention*, which was launched in Hanoi, December 10, 2008. A leading cause of global childhood injury and death is head trauma from road traffic accidents that can be prevented by wearing a helmet. The donation of 1,200 helmets to the children of Hoang Hoa Tham school demonstrates how easily children could be 'vaccinated' against head injuries from road traffic accidents.

The *Helmets for Kids* ceremony was sponsored by the Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition (VHWC), a public-private partnership established by AIP Foundation that has been a critical advocate and stakeholder in the use of helmets in Vietnam. The event is part of a coordinated effort by the VHWC to focus on increasing helmet use among children during the next six months.

The efficacy report of the first public awareness campaign carried out by the VHWC for the past two years has shown that parents, when asked if infants, toddlers, or older children should wear helmets, were more likely to say "no" than non-parents. This counter-intuitive trend was caused by misinformation about the safety of helmets for children. To reverse this trend, the AIP Foundation has redoubled its efforts to encourage child helmet use and spread scientifically based information about child helmets.

"Modification of the campaign's message to target parents and schools to increase helmet use among students is imperative," said Greig Craft, President of AIP Foundation. "We want to make lasting progress to change helmet wearing perceptions in Vietnam and need to educate the next generation."

"Rumors that children should not wear helmets are untrue. Child sized helmets, that meet national standards and when worn correctly are safe." states Dr. Jean Marc Olivé, WHO Representative in Viet Nam. "There is no known medical evidence to substantiate the myth that helmets cause injury, yet the life-saving benefits of helmet wearing are widely known."

Mitch Stoller, President of Safe Kids Worldwide, believes, "the VHWC's donation is an example of what all of us are attempting to accomplish worldwide. Children everywhere must start wearing helmets on motorbikes and bicycles. We are not just giving over 1,000 helmets to children today; we are educating them about the necessity of proper road safety protocol. We have one goal, and that is to save lives."

Happy students participated in activities at the school including traffic games and skits that stressed the importance of helmet use. While having fun, they were interactively educating themselves and their peers about traffic safety. Representatives from the Australian Embassy, AusAID, FIA Foundation, Safe Kids Worldwide, WHO, the Ministries of Health, Education & Training, and the National Traffic Safety Committee were in attendance.



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**About Vietnam Helmet Wearing Coalition (VHWC):**

The VHWC is a public-private partnership aimed at increasing awareness of the importance of motorbike helmets in Vietnam. The VHWC was responsible for the highly successful National Helmet Wearing Campaign (2007-08) that contributed to the Government's passage of a mandatory helmet law. Child helmet use continues to lag, though, and in response AIP Foundation is launching a Child Helmet Wearing Public Awareness Campaign in January. The VHWC members supporting the Child Helmet Campaign include AIP Foundation, AusAID, FIA Foundation, the National Traffic Safety Committee (NTSC), Safe Kids Worldwide, Talisman-Vietnam, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization (WHO). Parties interested in supporting the Child Helmet Wearing Public Awareness Campaign should contact AIP Foundation.

**About AIP Foundation:**

AIP Foundation is a US non-profit organization whose goal is to reduce injuries from road crashes, particularly involving children. The Foundation is implementing a national primary school education curriculum, and road safety public awareness campaigns. Its *Helmets for Kids* (HFK) program has distributed more than 350,000 child helmets to primary schools throughout Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. AIP Foundation's not-for-profit Protec Helmet Company has developed the world's first 'tropical' helmet and child motorbike helmet standard. The physically disabled are employed to assemble the helmets at the AIP Foundation factory, creating a valuable social model. All profits are put back into the community.